

## **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Working together for a successful KanCare transition**

By Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, M.D. and House Minority Leader Paul Davis, Esq.

It may be a surprise to see our names together in an opinion piece. As Democrats and Republicans, we don't always agree on issues like taxes or the budget.

But where we do agree is that we want to make sure our state Medicaid program known as KanCare is compassionate and effective. Poor and disabled Kansans rely on Medicaid for medical care, nursing homes, home health, and long term care. Most importantly, if Kansans have issues navigating the program, we want to make sure their questions are answered quickly, so that they get the care they need.

For years, these programs have been confusing and hard to navigate for thousands of Kansans. It was often hard to know who to call when you had a problem, so most times the issue went unresolved and undetected. Or other times, the only way they could get resolved was to call your Legislator or the Governor.

We want to fix that.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, Kansas Medicaid became KanCare, affecting nearly 370,000 Kansans. Under KanCare every Kansan who has Medicaid will have the choice of three insurers--Amerigroup, Sunflower and United.

A transition this big is hard, and there will be challenges. We want to make sure patients are protected and providers continue to see those they serve. After eight weeks, the transition has gone smoother than either of us expected, and we are dedicated to continuing this accountable transition.

To make sure Medicaid patients are protected, Kansans can change their insurer until April 4 and again at the end of this year. Each KanCare insurer offers a different benefit plan, so one may be better for you. Each of the health plans can be reached through their websites and assistance lines: Amerigroup, 800-600-4441; Sunflower, 877-644-4623; and United, 877-542-9238. So far 99% of consumer inquiries have been resolved within two business days.

The state also has expanded its access lines. Consumers can get their specific questions answered any time of day by calling the consumer assistance line at 866-305-5147.

If providers like doctors and hospitals need assistance they can call 800-933-6593. So far 1.1 million provider payments totaling more than \$200 million have been paid to providers across the state.

Another avenue for public input is a twice-weekly operator-assisted conference call where consumers, their families and caregivers as well as providers can engage state officials and the leaders of the health plans on a personal level. They can call in at 9 a.m. Mondays and Thursdays until February 28th to discuss their issue at 877-247-8650 and use ID code 79687456. Issues and resolutions are posted on the KDHE website.

Another way to resolve issues is to call our new KanCare Ombudsman, James Bart, who can be reached at 855-643-8180. Mr. Bart's primary focus is on individuals participating in HCBS waiver program or other long-term care services.

We want to make sure there is accountability and input on every level of the program. We support bills to provide oversight of KanCare by the Kansas Legislature. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has an advisory panel of citizens, providers, and stakeholders. Each insurer also implemented a similar advisory panel. And the Federal government is involved at every level too.

And as always, we encourage citizens to contact their legislators as well as either one of our offices with KanCare related questions at [www.Kansas.gov](http://www.Kansas.gov).

Not only do these access points enhance person-centered care, they also enable the state and the three health plans to address issues head-on. By creating a Medicaid program that is consumer and provider driven, we want a program that is responsive. We don't want the same problems to recur year after year.

As we transition nearly 370,000 Kansans into KanCare, we hope that you engage the process through and not assume that no one is there to help. No one expects such a sizable transition to be issue-free, so we must work together to get the job done—because in Kansas, that is what we do.

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